protected animals in Rajasthan; if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether the Minister of State for Welfare is reported to have said that she has report of some erstwhile Royal Family members regularly going on hunting expeditions nearby Delhi, if so, the details thereof and identity of the Royal family concerned?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir. As per report received from the Chief Wildlife Warden, Rajasthan on the night of 26th and 28th September, 1998 some film stars have been apprehended for illegal hunting of wild animals. Cases under Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 have been filed against the alleged offenders in the Court of Law.

(b) No specific report of any member of Royal family being involved in the said case has been received from the State Government.

Impact of reduction in import duty on Sugar

2199. SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Minister of Finance has proposed to reduce import duty on sugar;

(b) if so, what would be its impact on the indigenous sugar industry; and

(c) what is the availability of sugar and estimated demand for the current year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) No. Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The production of sugar for the current sugar season 1998-99 is provisionally estimated at 150 lakh tonnes. Taking into account the closing stock of sugar of 53.7 lakh tonnes as on 30.9.98 the total availability of sugar is estimated at 203.7 lakh tonnes in sugar season 1988-99. The internal consumption of sugar and exports are provisionally estimated at 144.00 lakh tonnes and 0.8 lakh tonnes respectively.

Release of Traders arrested under PBA

2200. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that traders arrested under Prevention of Black Marketing Act (PBA) by State Governments can be released by the Central Government after reviewing their cases;

(b) whether Government propose to amend such provisions in order to ensure that action taken by State Government is not nullified by the Central Government; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) Under the Prevention of Blackmarketing & Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980, the detention orders made by the State Governments can be revoked or modified by the Central Government.

(b) No. Sir.

(c) No suggestion in this regard has been received from any quarter.

Import of Australian Wheat

2201. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of agreements made for import of Australian wheat during the year;

(b) the reasons for import of wheat;

(c) the arrangements made for delivery and distribution of the imported wheat and

(d) the complaints made in regard to wheat received mixed with weeds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) due to untimely rains during the sowing seasons, the Ministry of Agriculture had initially estimated that the production of wheat during 1997-98 Rabi season was likely to be 64.51 million tonnes as against the production of 69.27 million tonnes during the previous year. Government had therefore, decided to import upto 20 lakh tonnes of wheat during 1998-99, against which the STC finalised contracts from import of 15 lakh tonnes (± 5%) of wheat from Australia. A total of 14.15 lakh tonnes of wheat has arrived in India against the above contract.

(c) and (d) Presence of some weed seeds was detected in the Australian wheat. Such weeds are in integral part of any foodgrains harvest and it is not unusual to detect weed seeds in any bulk import of foodgrains. The Australian wheat conforms to the provisions of the contract and the specifications laid down in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and is fit for human consumption. Government has advised the FCI to issue the imported wheat stocks to the State Governments against their monthly allocation for distribution through PDS exclusively in non-wheat growing areas. It has been decided to release additional quantities of wheat to the State Governments/UT Administrations for open sale ensuring that in case of open market sales, imported wheat goes only to the Roller Flour Mills.

कीमतों को स्थिर करने हेतु गेहूं का आयात

2202. **श्री डी० पी० यादव: क्या खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मंत्री** यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार गेहूं की कीमतों को स्थिर करने के लिए विदेश से गेहूं का आयात कर रही है; यदि हां, तो कितनी मात्रा का आयात किया जा रहा है;

(ख) देश में वर्ष 1997-98 में खाद्यान्नों की कुल कितनी मात्रा का उत्पादन हुआ तथा क्या उत्पादन की यह मात्रा गत वर्ष के खाद्यान्न उत्पादन की मात्रा से अधिक है; यदि हां तो कितनी?

खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मामलों के मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सत्य पाल सिंह यादव): (क) जी, हां। 1998-99 के दौरान सरकार ने राज्य व्यापार निगम के जरिए 14.15 लाख टन गेहूं का आयात किया था।

(ख) 1997-98 के दौरान खाद्यान्नों का सम्भावित कुल उत्पादन 193.12 मिलियन टन होने का अनुमान है जबकि पिछले वर्ष के दौरान 199.32 मिलियन टन खाद्यान्नों का उत्पादन हुआ था जो लगभग 6.20 मिलियन टन की गिरावट का द्योतक है।

Impact of ban on Export of Onions on NHRDF

2203. SHRI SITARAM KESRI: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ban on export of onions has put the National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF) in a tight financial spot; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken to neutralise the impact?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) NAFED has informed that the ban on export of onions has put the NHRDF in a tight financial spot as the development fund paid by onions exporters including NAFED based on their voluntary decison has been a major source of fund for running the organisation.